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## DINING OUT WITH HENRY THOREAU: A Field Guide to Food Wild, Cultivated, and Transcendental, by Frederick Wagner (1985 Presidential Address)

"...men have always thought more of eating than of fighting; then, as now, their minds ran chiefly on the 'hot bread and sweet cakes'..."<sup>1</sup>

Others have spoken of how Henry Thoreau fared on his travels. In The Wildest Country, for example, J. Parker Huber provides a tantalizing section on Thoreau's encounters with teas in The Maine Woods, yet, although Parker tells us that Thoreau sampled blueberries and raspberries and even ate a moose -- or at least part of one--he takes more delight in describing what moose or caribou or sheldrakes eat and what the kingfisher's cuisine is than he does in detailing Thoreau's ruminations. Perhaps it takes someone as moonstruck about food as I am to find amusement in tracing Thoreau's dietary progress through three travel books, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, Cape Cod, and The Maine Woods.

A Week, for all its transcendental drifting, occasionally drops anchor in firmly practical advice about thrifty excursions: "The cheapest way to travel, and the way to travel the furthest in the shortest distance, is to go afoot, carrying a dipper, a spoon, and a fish-line, some Indian meal, some salt, and some sugar. When you come to a brook or pond, you can catch fish and cook them; or you can boil a hasty pudding; or you can buy a loaf of bread at a farmer's house for fourpence, moisten it in the next brook that crosses the road, and dip into it your sugar,--this alone will last you a whole day;--or, if you are accustomed to heartier living, you can buy a quart of milk for two cents, crumb your bread or cold pudding into it, and eat it with your own spoon out of your own dish."<sup>2</sup> Thoreau offers this guidance about traveling afoot on the sixth day of his adventures mostly afloat.

On the first day, Saturday, Henry Thoreau and his brother John had loaded their boat, Henry tells us, "with potatoes and melons from a patch which he had cultivated. . . ." (W, 15) By the following Monday, he reveals, the brothers would rest occasionally beneath a maple or a willow, to refresh themselves with a melon as they contemplated "the lapse of the river and of human life." (W, 124) While slicing the melons, they reminded themselves that the green discs were fruits of the East, and their thoughts reverted to "Arabia, Persia, Hindostan, the lands of contemplation. . . ." (W, 126) When casting away the seeds, Henry thought, "He who eats the fruit, should at least plant. . . a better seed than that whose fruit he has enjoyed." (W, 125) As canal boats interrupted their solitude, they would throw the rinds of melons into the water as food for fish and added their own "breath to the life of living man." Now, Thoreau says, "Our

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melons lay at home on the sandy bottom of the Merrimack, and our potatoes in the sun and water at the bottom of the boat looked like a fruit of the country." (W, 144) Every step-slicing and eating the melon disposing of the seeds and rind--feeds Thoreau's imagination. The slight action supports twenty-odd pages of philosophic musing. But we hear nothing about how the melons tasted.

Another melon provided a comic interlude. By Wednesday, the fifth day of their voyage, apparently the week's store of Concord-grown melons had been exhausted. From a farmer both clever and well-disposed they bought a loaf of home-made bread for the main course at supper and musk and watermelons for dessert. "Having found a harbor for their boat at the mouth of a small creek, the young men set one of the largest melons to cool in the still water, but while they were pitching the tent, the melon set out seaward, with the Thoreaus soon in pursuit. When they overtook it, they discovered that it was at least as seaworthy as their boat, "so perfectly balanced that it had not keeled at all, and no water had run in at the tap which had been taken out to hasten its cooling." (W, 291)

They later bought another melon from the clever farmer's son Nathan, "a little flaxen-headed boy, with some tradition, or small edition, of Robinson Crusoe in his head," who found himself mesmerized by the brothers' adventure. (W, 290) The melon had been conveyed to Nathan "in the green state, and owned daily by his eyes. After due consultation with 'Father,' the bargain was concluded,--we to buy it at a venture on the vine, green or ripe, our risk, and pay 'what the gentlemen pleased.'" Although the voyagers had planned to use it as ballast, apparently it soon went the way of the other melons, not down the river seaward, but down the brothers' alimentary canals. Thoreau reported that it proved "ripe" --as if a reward for what he termed the "honest experience in selecting this fruit." (W, 315)

So far as one can determine, most of their suppers followed the pattern of the one on the Saturday they embarked: bread and sugar, then cocoa boiled in river water, and finally watermelon or some wayside fruit--huckleberries the first evening, but later raspberries or wild plums. What elevated the first supper was the ritual with which it concluded: "as we had drank in the fluvial prospect all day, so we now took a draught of the water with our evening meal to propitiate the river gods, and whet our vision for the sights it was to behold." (W, 39) Once, supper consisted of boiled rice, which Thoreau ate with a wooden spoon he had whitened, and a dipper of water from a well two-feet deep that he had dug with his own hands. (W, 185) One night the youths devoured a handsome pigeon they had plucked from the lower branches of a

white pine, but they ate uneasily, for "it did not seem to be putting the bird to its right use, to pluck off its feathers, and extract its entrails, and broil its carcass on the coals . . . ." (W, 223) Generally supper was frugal; it was the evening meditation that was rich, elaborate, and--some readers would maintain--indigestible at so late an hour.

Boiled rice apparently was the staple at the noonday dinner. On one occasion they captured some frisking squirrels, skinned and disembowelled them, then, on a sudden impulse, tossed them away and washed their hands. Their humanity was "tardy," Thoreau admits, but the creatures were "too wretched a resource for any but starving men. . . . If they had been larger, our crime had been less. Their small red bodies, little bundles of red tissue, mere gobbets of venison, would not have "fattened fire." (W, 224)

Thoreau gives no details about breakfasts. One suspects that he feasted on dew and the dawning sun, and, as he suggests in another context, tasted "the genuine nectar and ambrosia of the gods" in order to lead a "divine life." (W, 342)

On Tuesday, midway in his week, Thoreau sums up his attitude toward dining out on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers:

"There should always be some flowering and maturing of the fruits of nature in the cooking process. Some simple dishes recommend themselves to our imaginations as well as palates. In parched corn, for instance, there is a manifest sympathy between the bursting seed and the more perfect developments of vegetable life. . . . On my warm hearth these cereal blossoms expanded; here is the bank whereon they grew. Perhaps some such visible blessing would always attend the simple and wholesome repast." (W, 225)

In A Week Thoreau seems to profess little regard for food except as food for thought--although one cannot escape the suspicion that he would gladly have eaten his way through a melon patch. In Cape Cod the adventures in dining give us more of the gastronomic and less of the astronomic. The encounters are few, but pungent.

Breakfast, Thoreau reports, was commonly the only meal he took in a house while on the Cape.<sup>3</sup> The one breakfast he details is that in the house of the Wellfleet oysterman. While the oysterman's eighty-four-year-old wife got breakfast ready, the old man stood with his back to the chimney, telling stories and, as Thoreau squeamishly noticed, "ejecting his tobacco-juice right and left into the fire behind him, without regard to the various dishes which were there preparing"--eels, butter-milk cake, cold bread, green beans, doughnuts, and tea. Thoreau ate some applesauce and doughnuts, which he thought "had sustained the least detriment from the man's shots"; but his companion chose the hot cake and green beans. Only later did they compare notes: "I told him that the buttermilk cake was particularly exposed, and I saw how it suffered repeatedly, and I therefore avoided it; but he declared that . . . he witnessed that the apple-sauce was seriously injured, and had therefore declined that." (CC, 99)

A solitary dinner on the beach proved even more unsettling. Thoreau, having found a large clam of the species Mactra solidissima, cast ashore by a recent storm, encountered a wrecker who told him that the clam was "the sea-clam, or hen, and was good to eat." That noon on a sandhill, Thoreau

reduced damp driftwood to shavings, kindled a fire, and cooked the clam on the embers. "Though it was very tough," he remarked, "I found it sweet and savory, and ate the whole with a relish. Indeed, with the addition of a cracker or two, it would have been a bountiful dinner." (CC, 73) That evening the Wellfleet oysterman told him that before cooking the clams, the natives always removed a poisonous part. "People said it would kill a cat." (CC, 86) His pride was not justified. He soon felt the clam's potency and realized--alas--that he was not tougher than a cat. Indeed, he confides to the reader that "it proved an emetic . . . and I was made quite sick by it for a short time while he [the Wellfleet oysterman] laughed at my expense." (CC, 94) But Thoreau later found some comfort in his misadventure. On reading "Mourt's Relation of the Landing of the Pilgrims in Provincetown Harbor," he discovered that the Pilgrims had suffered the same discomfort. He was pleased, he says, to find that he was like them and that "man and the clam lay still at the same angle to one another." (CC, 95)

Thoreau found tobacco juice a constant hazard. At Provincetown early one morning he observed a fish-house where cod, just pickled, were packed several feet deep. Some men in cowhide boots were standing right on the cod and pitching them into a barrow. One young man repeatedly spat tobacco juice on the cod. "Well, sir," thought Thoreau, "when that older man sees you he will speak to you." Then the older man spat.

When Thoreau returned to the hotel for breakfast, the host offered beans or hashed cod. "I took the beans," Thoreau says, "though they never were a favorite dish of mine." (CC, 212) Yet later in exploring the Cape he admits to having "refreshed" himself at Fuller's Hotel with both beans and the codfish hash. (CC, 251) He notes that on the Cape the hash had "a remarkable proportion of fish," whereas farther inland potato predominated.

While on the Cape he never tasted fresh fish. Indeed, he observes laconically, "that is where fish are cured, and where, sometimes, travelers are cured of eating them." (CC, 213) Once, watching a fisherman lancing blackfish, he observed that the blubber, thick with oil, looked like pork, whereas the flesh, firm and red, resembled beef. The fisherman maintained that he liked fresh blackfish better than beef, which was brought from Boston by steamer. While blackfish were being slashed on the beach, boys would "come round with a piece of bread in one hand, and take a piece of blubber in the other to eat with it, preferring it to pork scraps." (CC, 144, 213) The natives, Thoreau makes clear, were a hardy lot.

Coming away from Cape Cod, one senses that the food--unlike that on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers--caused few reverberations in Thoreau's imagination, but one has a strong sense of the force with which it struck his sensibilities. The reverberations were in his stomach. As he portrays himself in Cape Cod, he seems to suffer from a lurking dyspepsia despite the blithe humor that shines on many pages.

In the Maine Woods, on the other hand, the reader perceives a heightened appetite, more physical and spiritual energy, and exaltation than he displayed either on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers or on Cape Cod. He shows greater



interest in and awareness of what he ate; his descriptions are more numerous and more detailed. Moving away from the civilized and the cultivated, his senses seem fully responsive in the wilderness.

However, no roving gourmet is likely to be roused by the list of provisions which Thoreau suggests will last three men twelve days: "Soft hardbread, twenty-eight pounds; pork, sixteen pounds; sugar, twelve pounds; one pound black tea or three pounds coffee, one box or a pint of salt, one quart Indian meal, to fry fish in; six lemons, good to correct the pork and warm water; perhaps two or three pounds of rice, for variety." (MW, 319) On one of his excursions to Maine he notes that he also carried some smoked beef. (MW, 86): What made dining out in the woods exciting was what the woods and streams yielded.

Breakfasts were ample. One of the first he notes, on the trip to Ktaadn, consisted of "tea, with hardbread and pork, and fried salmon, which he ate with forks neatly whittled from alder-twigs, which grew there, off strips of birch-bark for plates." (MW, 45) Freshly peeled birch-bark, turned wrong side up, frequently served as a table (MW, 166), and birch-bark also was "the unequaled wrapping-paper of the woods." (MW, 247). The tea which he mentions here was "black tea, without milk to color or sugar to sweeten it, and two tin dippers were our tea cups." (MW, 45) Occasionally, for the tea he substituted "strong coffee, well sweetened, in which we did not miss the milk" (MW, 166) or, even better than coffee, "a dipper of condensed cloud or water-spout." (MW, 62) Instead of the pork, he might have plucked ducks or moose meat or moose tongue. (MW, 99, 122, 283) Early one morning he caught three large red chivin, and the Indian guide made some hemlock tea, which Thoreau regarded as "tolerable"; he seemed to take greater enjoyment in watching the green hemlock sprigs boil in the kettle "in the open air," the leaves fast losing their lively green color, and knowing that it was for our breakfast." (MW, 283) One morning Thoreau emptied the leftover melted pork into the lake to watch the "slick" spread and smooth the turbulent surface. The Indian guide reproached him: "That make hard paddlum thro'; hold 'em canoe. So say old times." (MW, 167) Normally the campers used the pork fat to soften their stiffened boots and shoes. (MW, 226)

Although Thoreau rarely records having taken meals at the public-houses in Maine, he describes one such noonday meal at the house where the Houlton stage stopped: on the serving table "the front rank is composed of various kinds of 'sweet cakes,' in a continuous line from one end of the table to the other . . . a row of ten or a dozen plates of this kind . . . when the lumberers come out of the woods, they have a craving for cakes and pies, and such sweet things, which there are almost unknown, and this is the supply to satisfy that demand,--and these hungry men think a good deal of getting their money's worth . . . over this front rank, I say, you . . . have to assault what there is behind . . . to supply that other demand . . . for venison and strong country fare." (MW, 11-12) He also describes another meal indoors instead of out, this one in a log cabin. Thoreau and his companions were served a supper consisting of "piping hot wheaten-cakes . . . and ham, eggs, and potatoes, and milk and cheese, the produce of the farm; and, also, shad and salmon,

tea sweetened with molasses, and sweet cakes . . . Mountain cranberries (*Vaccinium Vitis-Idaea*), stewed and sweetened, were the common dessert." (MW, 23)

At supper at a lumberer's camp, Thoreau noted, "We had hot cakes . . . even here, white as snowballs, but without butter, and the never-failing sweet cakes, with which we filled our pockets, foreseeing that we should not soon meet with the like again. Such delicate puffballs seemed a singular diet for backwoodsmen." (MW, 35)

Once beyond even the civilization of the lumberers, the excursionists at dinner or supper typically would stand around a blazing fire, "under the damp and sombre forest of firs and birches, each [man] with a sharpened stick, three or four feet in length, upon which he had spitted his trout, or roach, previously well gashed and salted, our sticks radiating like the spokes of a wheel." (MW, 59)

Fish were abundant. One time, having baited their birch poles with pork, they found that instantly "a shoal of white chivin . . . , silvery roaches, cousin-trout, or what not, large and small, prowling thereabouts, fell upon our bait, and one after another were landed amidst the bushes. Anon their cousins, the true trout, took their turn...." (MW, 53)

That night Thoreau dreamed of trout-fishing: "when at length I awoke, it seemed a fable, that this painted fish swam there so near my couch, and rose to our hooks the last evening--and I doubted if I had not dreamed it all. So I arose before dawn to test its truth, while my companions were still sleeping. . . . Standing on the shore, I once more cast my line into the stream, and found the dream to be real and the fable true. The speckled trout and silvery roach, like flying fish, sped swiftly through the moonlight air, describing bright arcs on the dark side of Ktaadn, until moonlight, now fading into daylight, brought satiety to my mind. . . ." (MW, 55)

On the rare occasions when fresh fish eluded their grasp, they might resort to pickled salmon (MW, 29) or be "compelled to make the most of the crumbs of our hard bread and our pork." (MW, 71). And they ate moose-meat frequently.

One of the most passionate passages in *The Maine Woods* describes graphically what took place the first time Thoreau saw a moose shot, and the horror and disgust he felt. The conclusion sums up loathing: "What a coarse and imperfect use Indians and hunters make of nature! No wonder that their race is so soon exterminated. I already, and for weeks afterward, felt my nature the coarser for this part of my woodland experience, and was reminded that our life should be lived as tenderly and daintily as one would pluck a flower." (MW, 120)

When faced with a choice between moose-meat and applesauce, Thoreau chose the applesauce, "the greatest luxury to me," although the others called oftener for the moose-meat. (MW, 129) Fried moose-meat, he recalls, "tasted like tender beef, with perhaps more flavor; sometimes like veal." (MW, 117) And when his companion once cooked moose--"California fashion" over a fire of maplewood--"California fashion" called for "winding a long string of the meat round a stick and slowly turning it in his hand before the fire," a method suggesting a hand-operated rotisserie--Thoreau tasted the result and pronounced it "very good." (MW, 288)

Although he does not report his response to smoked moose-meat, he describes the process in

precise detail, ending by picturing the scene surrounding the huge crate on which the large, thin pieces were curing: "There was the whole heart, black as a thirty-two pound ball, hanging at one corner. . . . Refuse pieces lay about on the ground in different stages of decay, and some pieces also in the fire, half buried and sizzling in the ashes, as black and dirty as an old shoe. . . . a tremendous rib-piece was roasting before the fire, being impaled on an upright stake forced in and out between the ribs." (MW, 134-35)

As for beverages in the wilderness, tea and coffee were served at almost every meal, and on two occasions Thoreau refreshed himself with a draught of beer, which he celebrated in a joyous outburst: it was "clear and thin, but strong and stringent as the cedar sap. It was as if we sucked at the very teats of Nature's pine-clad bosom in these parts,--the sap of all Millinocket botany commingled--the topmost, most fantastic and spiciest sprays of the primitive wood, and whatever invigorating and stringent gum or essence it afforded, steeped and dissolved in it--a lumberer's drink, which would acclimate and naturalize a man at once--which would make him see green, and, if he slept, dream that he had heard the wind sigh among the pines." (MW, 27-28)

The notion of drawing spiritually intoxicating draughts from nature appears in other passages in *The Maine Woods*, as when Thoreau reports that the "evergreen woods had a decidedly sweet and bracing fragrance; the air was a sort of diet-drink" (MW 16), or when he remarks that, for dessert, he helped himself "to a large slice of the Chesuncook woods, and took a hearty draught of its waters with all my senses." (MW, 129)

But equally bracing for Thoreau were blueberries and raspberries. "When any lagged behind," he tells us on the first expedition, "the cry of 'blueberries' was most effectual to bring them up." (MW, 59) And on the last excursion he says that "we did full justice to the berries, and they were just what we wanted to correct the effect of our hard bread and pork diet. Another name for a portage would have been going a berrying." (MW, 277) The higher one went, the smarter and spicier the flavor of the blueberries. (MW, 66, 71) He liked cranberries, whether they were raw or made into sauce (MW, 66, 131), but when--at the suggestion of his Indian guide--he tried the fruit of the naked viburnum and the hobble bush, he "found them rather insipid and seedy." (MW, 106)

Thoreau's two Indian guides, Joe Aietteen and Joe Polis, had much to do, I think, with the heightened awareness of food Thoreau reveals in *The Maine Woods*. Aietteen kept reminding Thoreau that he could not work without eating. (MW, 166) Before setting out hunting, he would remark, "We ought to have some tea before we start; we shall be hungry before we kill that moose.: (MW, 95) Joe Polis, the other guide, "commonly reminded us that it was dinner-time . . . [and that] one who worked hard all day was very particular to have his dinner in good season." (MW, 278. Polis was especially fond of partridges, ducks, dried moose-meat, hedgehogs, and even loons, though he warned Thoreau to be sure to 'bile 'em good." (MW, 183)

From Polis, Thoreau learned that the roots of the *Lilium superbum* could be used instead of flour to thicken soups. Thoreau dug some up; raw, they tasted "somewhat like raw green corn on the ear."

(MW, 189) Later he gathered some bulbs of the wild yellow lily (*Lilium Canadensis*) even though "It was slow work, grubbing them up amid the sand, and the mosquitoes were all the while feasting on me." (MW, 280) Polis told him that an excellent soup could be made by combining the yellow roots with otter oil. (MW, 279) Thoreau probably never made lily-otter soup, but following Polis's directions, he tried another recipe: "I washed the bulbs carefully, minced some moose-meat and some pork, salted and boiled all together, but we had not patience to try the experiment fairly, for he said it must be boiled till the roots were completely softened so as to thicken the soup like flour; but though we left it on all night, we found it dried to the kettle in the morning, and not yet boiled to a flour. Perhaps the roots were not ripe enough, for they [Indians] commonly gather them in the fall. As it was, it was palatable enough, but it reminded me of the Irishman's limestone broth." (MW, 288) By accident, Thoreau stirred the soup with a striped maple or moose-wood stick. Fortunately he had peeled it, for Polis later pointed out that the bark was an emetic. (MW, 288)

Thoreau questioned the Indian about food, he said, because "I wished to learn all I could before I got out of the woods." (MW, 288) He records another of Joe Polis's recipes, one for a drink that packed a potential bang: "Taking the dipper [of water] in one hand, he seized his powder-horn with the other, and pouring into it a charge or two of powder, stirred it up with his finger, and drank it off." (MW, 290-91) So far as I know, Thoreau never tried gunpowder punch, perhaps because he hoped to have several more lives to live.

#### ENDNOTES

1. *The Maine Woods*, ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer (1972), 128, in *The Writings of Henry Thoreau*, ed. Walter Harding et al., 7 vols. to date (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971- ). Hereafter cited as MW, by page number.
2. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, ed. Carl Hovde et al. (1980), 305, in *The Writings of Henry Thoreau*. Hereafter cited as W, by page number.
3. *Cape Cod*, Vol. IV of *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. H. E. Scudder (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1906), 73. Hereafter cited as CC, by page number.

#### THOREAU LOOKS AT "KATADN", by Donald H. Williams

A curious ambiguity is noted in the "Chesuncook" chapter of *The Maine Woods*. In the record of his 1853 trip to Chesuncook Lake and return Thoreau on two occasions mentions views of Mt. Katadn - which he had visited in 1846 in an approach from the West Branch of the Penobscot River. In 1853 Thoreau and his party travelled the length of Moosehead Lake by steamer from Greenville on September 16, then crossed the Northeast Carry for a down-river canoe trip to Chesuncook Lake. The day before entering the lake (Sept. 17) the party arrived at the "Pine Stream Deadwater," where Thoreau recorded seeing the distant Katadn, about 30 miles away. He writes (page 109, *The Maine Woods*, Princeton Ed.),

- (a) After passing through some long rips and by a large island, we reached an interesting part of the river called the Pine Stream Dead-water, about six miles below Ragmuff, where the river



expanded to thirty rods in width and had many islands in it, with elms and canoe birches, now yellowing, along the shore, and we got our first sight of Katadn. (Emphasis supplied.)

Later, while in Bangor from September 21 to 26, on his return trip to Concord and home, Thoreau sought out the vista of Katadn from the city, 78 miles distant, and writes (page 151, The Maine Woods, Princeton Ed.),

- b) I got my first clear view of Katadn, on this excursion, from a hill about two miles northwest of Bangor, whither I went for this purpose. After this I was ready to return to Massachusetts. (Emphasis supplied.)

The suggested contradiction between the two foregoing quotations raises the questions: In (b) above does Thoreau really mean "first" view, or should it have been the "last" view (which it actually was); or, does he mean that the view described in (a) was not "clear?" The view from Pine Stream is less than half the distance of that from Bangor, and the Katadn group is prominent on the horizon, unless the day is heavily overcast. With any degree of visibility, Thoreau would have first seen Katadn by the 4th day of the 1853 trip.

It takes a very good day to see Katadn from Bangor. During the course of the stage journey from Bangor to Greenville, in the "unexpectedly level country" of that route, he reported, "it is said -- in clear weather," that frequent views of Katadn" are afforded (but he does not state that he saw the mountain from the stage route).

Thoreau could really have meant exactly what he wrote in (b), thus qualifying the Bangor experience with clear visibility, i.e. the first clear view (as opposed to an unclear view), but it does seem odd to stress the first view of the mountain as he was about to leave the city for home, at the completion of the expedition. It would seem to be more natural for Thoreau to write nostalgically of his last view, as he left for Concord. (He was not to see the mountain again until 1857, when he duplicated the 1853 route as far as Chesuncook Lake.)

Since, in fact, Thoreau did first see Katadn on September 16, from Pine Stream, clear or otherwise, the evidence can be weighted to favor the (b) quotation as more correctly reflecting on his last view ("on this excursion") before going home. Could his Journal have been in error, or is his holograph scrawl sufficiently confusing to mistake the words "first" for "last?"

#### EMERSON'S FIRST PURCHASE OF WALDEN LAND

In the fall of 1844 Ralph Waldo Emerson purchased at public auction a small, pie-shaped eleven-acre piece of land on the shores of Walden Pond to prevent its wood being cut. That purchase was to inspire Thoreau the next spring to build his Walden cabin. We print here the official record of that purchase from the Middlesex County Court files and called to our attention by Robert Galvin. Later Emerson was to purchase many other tracts bordering on Walden, but this was the original purchase:

"Know All Men by these Presents, That I, Cyrus Stow of Concord in the County of Middlesex and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, administrator of the Estate of Thomas Wyman, deceased, late of said

Concord in the County of Middlesex, intestate by an order of the Court of Probate begun and holden at Concord in and for said County of Middlesex, on the thirteenth day of August last was licensed and duly empowered to sell and pass deeds, to convey so much of the real estate of the said Wyman as will raise the sum of one hundred seventy nine dollars and forty seven cents. That I gave public notice of the intended sale agreeably to the directions of said court and the law, by posting notifications of the intended time and place of sale, in Concord where said real estate lies and in Lincoln and Acton, two next adjoining towns. That I first, before fixing upon the time and place of sale, took and subscribed the oath by law in such cases prescribed: that on the twenty first day of September in the year eighteen hundred and forty four, pursuant to the license and notice aforesaid, I did sell, at public auction, for the sum of eighty nine dollars and ten cents to Ralph Waldo Emerson of Concord aforesaid, the highest bidder therefore, the following described piece or parcel of land, being the whole of the real estate of said Thomas Wyman deceased; to wit:- a certain piece or parcel of land situated in the southerly part of said Concord, containing eleven acres more or less, bounded northerly on the County Road: Easterly on land of John H. Richardson, Southerly on Walden Pond and land of Cyrus Hubbard, and Westerly on land of Hartwell Bigelow and John Potter, being the same parcels of land described in a deed from James Barrett to said Wyman, dated June 28th A.D. 1823 and Recorded in Registry Aug. 30th 1824 Book 255, Page 465 and in deed from Joseph G. Cole and others to said Wyman dated the fifth day of April A. D. 1834 and recorded June 27th 1835, Book 342 Page 479.

Therefore, Know Ye That I the said Cyrus Stow administrator as aforesaid by virtue of the power and authority in me vested as aforesaid, and in consideration of the aforesaid sum of eighty nine dollars and ten cents paid by the said Emerson, the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge, do hereby give, grant, sell and convey unto the said Ralph W. Emerson, his heirs and assigns, all the estate, right, title and interest, which the said Thomas Wyman had in and to the premises above mentioned and described, or howsoever otherwise the same are reputed to be bounded or described.

To Have And To Hold the aforesaid premises with all the privileges and appurtenances to the same belonging to the said Emerson, his heirs and assigns to his and their use and behoof forever. And I the said Cyrus, administrator as aforesaid, do hereby covenant with the said Emerson, his heirs and assigns, that I was lawfully authorized, empowered and licensed to make sale of the same, as aforesaid: that I gave public notice of the said intended sale, agreeable to the law and said order. that before fixing on the time and place of said sale, I took and subscribed the oath by law required; that it was necessary the same should be sold for the purpose and reasons aforesaid; that the premises were struck off to the said Emerson for the sum aforesaid, at a public vendue as aforesaid; and that he the said Emerson offered most for the same. In Witness Whereof, I the said Cyrus Stow administrator as aforesaid, have hereunto set my hand and seal this twenty first day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty four. Cyrus Stow Administrator, Middlesex ss. October 1st 1844.

Thus the above named Cyrus Stow, Administrator personally acknowledged the above Instrument, by him subscribed to be his free act and deed- before me, Nathan Brooks, Justice of the Peace, Middlesex, ss, Oct. 3, 1844. Signed, sealed and delivered in presence of us, Moses Prichard, N. Brooks.

ALCOTT, LANE, THOREAU by Edward Waldo Emerson

(We are indebted to the Concord Free Public Library for permission to publish this manuscript, dated October 17, 1882, by Emerson's son, that is in their possession.)

At Club tonight I talked with Sam Staples and asked him if Father married him. He said 'yes, Your Father married me, it was in 1839, in the parlour (April 29th) of the Middlesex. I was tendin' bar there then.

"Your Father in law, old Mr. Wesson, kept the house didn't he?" "Yes. Mr. Alcott and a Mr. Lane Dwight came with your Father and were the (only?) witnesses. I guess it was about the first time Mr. Lane went to your Father's. 'T must have been that they went down to your Father's house and talked and that he told 'em that he'd got an engagement down town and that he'd got to go and they could come along."

"Well it wasn't long before you put both of those men in prison."

"No I had 'em both there in the jail afterwards. I was Collector that year (as well as jailer)" I see 'em both about their taxes a number of times and they thought they shouldn't pay. Mr. Alcott said he didn't use the woods any more 'n he did the fields."

But wasn't it about the Mexican War that they objected. I thought that was the ground on which Mr. Thoreau reproved. "I don't know but he did, but I guess they didn't say anything about that. They thought they oughtn't to be taxed and didn't think they should pay. I told both of 'em that if they thought their rates was too high I'd go with 'em before the selectmen and see if they couldn't take off something, but they said 'No, they wouldn't do anything about that, they thought they shouldn't pay."

Well I told 'em that I'd come up again on a certain day and I'd they could either pay or I'd take them on a drive with me in the Sleigh to the jail

"Did you take them all (Alcott, Lane and Thoreau) at once" "No, I had 'em all at different times" Did they make any resistance? "No they came quiet enough. I went up for Ole Man Alcott to the Hosmer Cottage, when he lived there, the day I said I should, and knocked and they asked me in and I asked him if he was a going to pay and he said he wasn't, so I said he could get right in with me and ride down. Miss Alcott she came up and says come "Now Mr. Staples, you ain't a going to carry my husband off and hardly a loaf o' bread in the house for the children's supper" Why, says I, I'll give him a supper down to my place and then there'll be all the more for you here." I thought she kind o' laughed smiled a little at that and I took him down and I give him a supper."

"Did Mr. Lane make any resistance?" "No, I don't remember that he did. Didn't he stand on his rights as a British subject?" "No he didn't make anything of that."

Well then taxes were paid for them and they let

out? Yes, come to think of it I guess Mr. Alcott didn't stay overnight. I guess it wasn't more'n 9 o'clock when I let him go home." "Yes," (lowering his voice) "I think it was Old Mr. Hoar, the Squire you know, that paid for one of 'em that was all I knew surely, the money was just left at the door for the others."

I always thought Miss Lizzy Elizabeth Hoar paid for 'em"

"You had Mr. Thoreau over night." Yes, and I believe Lane was there two or three days before he was let out."

SARAH ALDEN RIPLEY ON THE DEATH OF THOREAU

Sarah Alden Ripley, who lived in the Old Manse in Concord, was a life-long admirer of Thoreau. On the day of his death she wrote to Sophia Thayer, "This fine morning is sad for those of us who sympathize with the friends of Henry Thoreau the philosopher and woodman. He had his reason to the last and talked with his friends pleasantly and arranged his affairs, and at last passed in quiet sleep from this state of duty and responsibility to that which is behind the veil. His funeral service is to be at the church, and Mr. Emerson is to make an address. I hope Uncle George will get home in season to be there, he will regret it so much if he does not." ---Manuscript in the S.S. Ripley Papers in the Schlesinger Library of Radcliffe College. Printed with permission of the library.

THE 1986 ANNUAL MEETING . . .

It will be held on Saturday July 12 in the First Parish Church in Concord. Coffee will be served in the vestry beginning at 9 a.m. Business meeting will be at 10, followed by the Speaker of the Day Jacques Barzun. Luncheon at noon by reservation. The afternoon will feature among other activities a boat trip on the Merrimack Canal and tours of various Concord sites. Sherry party and book autographing at the Lyceum at 5. Picnic (reservations only) at 6. David Shi will speak at the evening session. On Friday evening at 8 Joseph Kopycinski will speak on the Merrimack Canal. For reservations for the luncheon and picnic and for a bed and breakfast, see inserts with this bulletin.

The finance committee will present for vote at the annual meeting a new membership fee schedule of \$10 a year for students; \$20 for regular members; \$35 for family; \$100 for benefactors (if repeated for ten years, life membership will be given); and \$500 for life membership.

Add to the nominations listed in the previous bulletin: chairman of the executive committee, John Clymer; chairman of the program committee, Malcolm Ferguson; and member of the board of directors, Jane Langton--all for one year.

New appointments to the Lyceum Committee include Al Cittipaldi and Joseph Griffiths

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We are indebted to the following for information submitted: L.Beaulieu, A.Bula, J. Dawson, F.Dedmond, M.Detterline, M.Fenn, M.Ferguson, R.Galvin, G.Hannon, D.Holroyd, D.Kamen-Kaye, K.Kasegawa, R.Lucas, V.Mackey, L.May, D. McClure, J.Michel, M.Pitts, E.Schofield, E. Shaw, M.Sperber, J.Vickers, and J. Zuithoff. Please keep the secretary informed of items he has missed and new ones as they appear.

#### NOTES AND QUERIES . . .

Ball State University in Muncie, Ind. featured a symposium on "Thoreau in His Time and Ours" on April 2 & 3. Francis Dedmond was the keynote speaker.

Videoimage (1666 Mass. Ave., Lexington, Mass. 02173) is selling a 30 minute video tape following Thoreau's footsteps at Walden.

According to the CONCORD JOURNAL for Feb. 6, 1986, Tammis Coffin, under a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and YANKEE MAGAZINE is mapping all the trails of Walden Pond.

Says Wallace Nutting (FURNITURE TREASURY, Macmillan, 1933, p.399): "Thoreau... saw what had been there for others to see from the remotest generations. A paradise is not hunted, it is observed."

Robert Galvin and Joel Myerson have each

contributed \$100 to the Marilyn Blaisdell Fund, income from which is used to maintain the archives of the Thoreau Society.

Sotheby's New York sale catalog for Feb. 14, 1986, lists a copy of the 1849 WEEK with the "last three lines printed on p. 396." Did they mean "omitted" instead of "printed," or is there such a printing?

An extremely rare plant, Isoetes Macrospora (lake quillwort) has recently been discovered in Walden Pond by Bruce Sorrie of the Mass. Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife.

The Conservation Law Foundation of New England has recently filed a complaint that the Walden Pond Park Commissioners are violating a 26-year-old court decree by failing to repair erosion of the pond's banks, according to the Feb.13 CONCORD JOURNAL.

Can anyone help us identify where Thoreau says, "If I can put one touch of a rosy sunset into the life of any man or woman, I shall feel that I have worked with God"?

An "Anacrostic" in the March, 1986 PACKET DELL says, "Generally speaking follow Thoreau's maxim: 'Simplify, simplify.' (If he meant it absolutely, he would simply have said 'Simplify' and left it at that.)"

Concord selectmen have refused to close the Concord High School parking lot to cut the number of swimmers at Walden Pond CONCORD JOURNAL, March 13, 1986.

When asked by NEW ENGLAND MONTHLY (Nov. 1985, pp.66ff) to name the quintessential New England books, Annie Dillard and John Updike replied WALDEN, and Paul Theroux, Edward Hoagland, and Anne Bernays, replied CAPE COD.

A memorial exhibition for graphic designer Ken White, at Arizona State University's School of Art last fall featured his poster based on Thoreau's "This world is but canvas to our imaginations."

According to Carol Gelderman's HENRY FORD, THE WAYWARD CAPITALIST, among Ford's favorite reading was Thoreau and he had "Chop your own wood and it will warm you twice--Thoreau" carved over his fireplace mantel.

In Emily Dickinson's personal library now in the Houghton Library of Harvard University are four volumes of Thoreau: (1) an 1862 edition of Walden with little pencil marks at the beginnings of the chapters on "Reading," "Sounds," "Solitude," "Visitors," "The Village," "The Pond in Winter," "Spring" and "Conclusion;" (2) Another 1862 edition of Walden with Wm. A. Dickinson's bookplate and labeled "Given us by Maria" with a few corners turned down and pages 310 and 311 uncut; (3) An 1862 edition of A Week, autographed "E. Dickinson" and with lines 17 to 26 on page 39 marked in the margin; and (4) An 1865 edition of Letters to Various Persons autographed "S. H. Dickinson" on the title-page but with no other markings.

Thoreau's translation of the "Prometheus Bound" of Aeschylus in the Dial is praised in the Boston Semi-Weekly Advertiser for September 29, 1849.